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ABSTRACT

Community education gives public librarians the cpportunity to become engaged in a cooperative project which could lead to expanded services. The movement, started in 1936, has expanded throughout the United States. Community education programs attempt to foster ccmmunity participation, develop interaction between schools and the community, coordinate interaction of community resources, improve relaticns between social and governmental agencies, and enable ccmmunity self actualization. Public libraries also serve the total community. Community education and public library outreach programs are compatible; both require qualified leaders with professional, managerial, communication, attitudinal skills--the director acting as a community change agent. The library can cooperate with public schools ir sharing assets, professional expertise, information and referral, contact with people, and programming. Steps and suggestions for involving the library in existing ccmmunity education programs and for initiating programs are given. (Author/KP)

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION:

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR

PUBLIC LIBRARY INVOLVEMENT.

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Many public schools across the United States are recognizing the need for expansion of services to their communities. Community Education is one of the more successful ventures and presents an opportunity for public librarians to become engaged in a project of cooperation that could lead to expansion of services. The purpose of this paper is to explore ways Public Libraries can become involved.

The paper will be divided into four parts: the Community Education movement, an overview; Community Education/ Public Library outreach: they are compatible; leadership: a key to success; a methodology for library involvement in Community Education; and the conclusion

I. THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION MOVEMENT: AN OVERVIEW.

A. Birth of the Movement.

The Community Education movement was born in Flint, Michigan in 1936 under the leadership of Dr. Frank J. Manley. While the Flint schools were having less than desired impact on the total community, Manley observed that school facilities were vacant much of the year. Rather than remain empty during after school hours and summer months, he devised a plan whereby various programs could be offered to the public. Response, though less than enthusiastic at first, began to flourish, so did community interest in schools.

The Mott Foundation, observing the program, lent financial support: in time it made possible training of educators interested in the dynamics of the program. A National Center for Community Education was established in Flint, and by 1975, C.S. Mott Foundation Centers for Community

had been
Education Development ~~were~~ established in every state of the nation. A Community Education Association was established in 1963, and a Community Education Journal was introduced in 1971.

B. Philosophy of Community Education.

Basically, Community Education attempts to accomplish five objectives:[1]

1. Develop community programs not already initiated by other local agencies. For the purpose of fostering community participation, they can include educational, cultural enrichment, recreational, community problem solving classes.
2. Develop interaction between school and community.
3. Attempt to coordinate interaction of community resources.
4. Improve relationships between social and governmental agencies.
5. Enable community self-actualization.

These objectives are based on community oriented philosophy of education. LeTarte and Minzey in their book Community Education: from Program to Process define their approach as follows:

> Community Education is a philosophical concept which serves the entire community by providing for all of the educational needs of all of its community members. It uses the local school to serve as the catalyst for bringing community resources to bear on community problems in an effort to develop a positive sense of community, improve community living, and develop the community process toward the end of self-actualization.[2]

Public libraries are also interested in serving the total community. In the same year the Community Education Association was started, a symposium on library service to the disadvantaged was held. As will be seen, compatability

of methodology for effecting humanization of the community exists.

II. COMMUNITY EDUCATION/PUBLIC LIBRARY OUTREACH: THEY ARE COMPATIBLE.

Community Education, as an outreach arm of public schools, has subscribed to a formulated system of practice to accomplish its goals and objectives. Public Libraries actively involved in outreach have developed similar procedures though not as uniformly: nevertheless, compatibility with Community Education exists. Eleanor Frances Brown, author of Library Service to the Disadvantaged, and Stark and Berridge of Texas A&M University's Center for Community Education set forth basic requirements for successful community involvement.[3] A comparison of the two reveals the following similarities:

1. Each requires commitment from administrative and governmental leaders.
2. Identification of and communication with groups, organizations, agencies, institutions is essential.
3. Effective person to person communication essential, using door to door surveys and periodic canvassing, for the purpose of assessing residents' wants and needs.
4. Initiate meaningful programs and extend service to the community.
5. Establish city wide/neighborhood councils: planning is to be made with people in the community, not for them.
6. Communicate services through the media and small groups, undertake the role of "information broker".
7. Evaluate and assess needs of the program as it matures.

Does Community Education exist in your Public Library service area? If so, and you are being guided by principles similar to those set forth by Brown, there is no reason why cooperation should not succeed and make it mutually beneficial for both programs. If Community Education is being considered in your area and you are guided by the Brown principles, Community Education will need your support and involvement.

III. LEADERSHIP: A KEY TO SUCCESS.

A. Community Education and Public Library outreach programs require qualified leaders. Without specialized guidance and awareness of communication techniques, programs initiated will flounder and fail, resulting in one more chapter of unfulfilled promises for community residents. Both Brown and LeTarte/Minzey define desired qualities for innovative community leaders.

1. Brown, speaking for directors of Public Library outreach programs lists the following:

> The director of an outreach program must be selected with the utmost discrimination, far more than for the usual library position, in which the staff member remains in the building for the most part and has the average run of contacts with the patron. The person heading an outreach program must be someone who can create ideas, assist in materials selection, generate enthusiasm, know how to recruit and train volunteers, work extremely well with people and co-workers, encourage and facilitate communications and cooperation with other agencies in the community, and have energy, perseverance and patience. In addition, and even more important than technical library training, is the importance of having had training or experience in the fields of psychology, sociology, or social welfare work. Someone who has worked with the disadvantaged before is highly desirable but also difficult to find if he is to possess many of the other traits mentioned. The most important library requirement is that he know

books, knowledge of which could have been gained from adult and children's literature courses in college or in special evening courses.[4]

2. LeTarte and Minzey, speaking for Community Education list the following desirable characteristics:

...the director must be creative and have a warm, outgoing personality. He must like people and be capable of showing compassion without pity. He must be the kind of person to be trusted by people of all ages. He must be free from prejudice with r-spect to people of any race and/or socio-economic circumstances. Humility and consistency are two essential qualities. The director must be in good emotional and physical health and capable of usstained energy and vigor for long periods of time. Flexibility and adaptability are essential personal qualities. The director should be a good team member and a skillful leader.[5]

As for the nature of the work they say:

The nature of the director's job is extremely varied. He will need to be an organizer in order to develop the community with which he is working. He will have to be task-oriented, carrying out his responsibility, regardless of the time involved or schedule required. He will find himself serving on committees of various kinds, surveying the community, working with other agencies, developing and supervising programs, serving as a resource person to the local school staff, visiting homes, speaking at public meetings, employing staff, developing budgets, seeking funding, and administering programs.[6]

B. Learned Skills.

The above qualifications may seem extremly high and unlikely to be found in any one individual. If, however, the qualifications are closely examined, four primary learned skills are required: professional, managerial, communication, and attitudinal.

1. Professional skills.

Professional skills can be developed through formal and informal education or on the job training. They require certain mental abilities without which an individual's coping and problem solving ability will be lacking.

2. Managerial skills.

   These skills can also be developed through formal education or on the job training. The successful manager does require an underlying emotional stability.

3. Communicative skills.

   Communicating change as is required of the director of Community Education or Public Library outreach can be developed through formal education and on the job training.

4. Attitudinal skills.

   Although attitudes can be learned or unlearned, it is far less likely that dehumanizing prejudices will be eliminated over any short period of time. Individuals exibiting economic, racial, educational, chauvinistic, age level prejudices should be examined rather closely before being allowed to direct community oriented programs.

The four skills selected can be weighted as to importance for directorship: highest priority should be given to attitudes, followed by communicative skills, and equal importance for professional and managerial abilities. All of these skills point the director to the role of a community change agent.

C. The Functions of a Change Agent.

One of the leaders in the field of understanding the function of the change agent is Everett M. Rogers. He and F. Floyd Shoemaker wrote a book titled Communication of Innovations.[7] Penetrating the dynamics of the diffusion of new ideas, practices, the authors write about the change agent:

> The change agent functions as a communication link between two or more social systems. For example, a company salesman provides linkage between his change agency, a drug manufacturer and the client system of medical doctors whom he contacts. Similarly, a technical assistance

> worker provides linkage between a more developed nation and clients in the less developed country in which he is introducing innovations.

They then go on to emphasize vital aspects of the change agent's role:

> There is often a social chasm between the system represented by agents of change and the clients' system. Typical disparities between such systems include subcultural language difference (even though both may ostensibly share a common tongue), socioeconomic status, technical competence, and beliefs and attitudes. Change agents, even though they link the two social systems, may be quite heterophilous in relation to their clients or to their superiors in the change agency. This heterophily gap on both sides of the change agent creates role conflict and problems in communication....As a bridge between two differing systems, the change agent is necessarily a marginal man with one foot in each of two worlds. His success in linking the change agency with his client system lies at the heart of the process of planned change.[8] (Underlining, mine)

In concluding this section, it has been shown that the ideal Community Education director and Public Library outreach director embrace similar role expectations insofar as the process of community change is concerned. Where the role expectations are mutual, cooperative efforts should rate a high possibility, resulting in increased service by both institutions.

IV. A METHODOLOGY FOR LIBRARY INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION.

Is your local school district involved in Community Education? If not, does it plan to become involved. What relationship is your Public Library taking toward Community Education? The purpose of this section is to outline possible courses of action for library participation with public schools in the concept.

A. Your library can be a Candidate for Cooperation.

What kind of stance does your library take toward the community? Does it embrace the values entertained by Brown? The following list of assets can be the basis for cooperation:

1. Willingness to share assets and secrets of the trade such as:

   a. Program resources.
   b. Community contacts with agencies and individuals.
   c. Library resources including book collections, A/V hard and software, staff personnel.

2. Professional expertize.

   a. Knowledge of books.
   b. Bibliographic information.
   c. Instruction in library use.
   d. Management skills.
   e. Communication skills and community awareness.

3. Information and referral.

   a. Analyzation of information trends, i.e. educational, recreational, survival needs, etc.
   b. Current awareness of agency services.
   c. Fulfilling the role of "information broker".

4. Contact with people.

   a. Familarity with the library user's needs.
   b. Community canvassing and needs assessment activities.
   c. Knowledge of community leaders, formal and informal.
   d. Mass media advertizing.
   e. Participation in public meetings.

5. Programming.

   a. Expertize in program development and recruiting.
   b. Awareness of federal, state and local programs at the disposal of the community.

By no means exhaustive, this list can be expanded to fit the role your library plays in the community.

B. Getting Involved in an Established Community Education Program.

If your local school district has adopted the Community Education concept and your library would like to become involved, what steps should you take?

1. Learn the name of the Community Education director. If he or she has not already been in contact with you, arrange a meeting at the C.E. office.

2. Become familiar with the state of the art in Community Education. The Community Education Journal[9] should be available at the director's office.

3. If Community Education workshops are to be held in your community, ask for permission to attend.

4. Get on the C.E. mailing list.

5. If a C.E. advisory council has been formed, ask to be invited. Observe participants: mutual acquaintances or agency leaders and private citizens with whom you are not familiar may be present.

6. After conferring with the C.E. director, attend a sampling of programs initiated at the center.

7. Talk with class participants. You may have met them in your library, at church, or neighborhood meetings. What do they have to say about the program?

8. Search library and educational literature: how are libraries cooperating with Community Education in other areas.

9. Discuss the C.E. concept with your professional peers. Your State Library or Library Association may be aware of cooperative programs. Arrange a visit with involved librarians, discuss the dynamics of cooperation including pros and cons.

10. Contact your library school alma mater, perhaps some members of the faculty have been involved in Community Education projects or are familiar with cooperative programs.

11. Contact your state C. S. Mott Foundation Center for Community Education Development, personnel may be aware of cooperative programming with public libraries.[10]

If you follow these steps in the order of your choosing, you may or may not want to involve yourself in the program--you will be more knowledgeable about Community Education's purpose in the community. If you find merit in the concept and would like to become involved, proceed as follows in the order of your choosing.

1. A primary consideration should be communicating merits of the program to your staff. If this can be accomplished, they will be able to translate the C.E. concept to library users and may even be in a position to influence administrative support for you. How can you communicate C.E. to them?

   a. Invite the Community Education director to a staff meeting.
   b. During staff development sessions, present visual aids about C.E. The Mott Foundation has developed a number of films and filmstrips about the project. The Community Education director should have access to them.
   c. Encourage staff members to visit C.E. classes (some may even want to enroll in a program).

2. Communicate the program to your superiors. Without their support, cooperation may be given limitations.

   a. Provide literature about C.E.
   b. Invite them to participate in activities such an advisory council, C.E. classes.
   c. Show how cooperation can expand library service and increase exposure to the public.
   d. Arrange a meeting with the C.E. director at the public library for the purpose of discussing merits of the program.

3. If possible, become a member of a C.E. advisory council.

   a. You will meet agency leaders and citizens who may have never been to your library--a good opportunity for institutional exposure.
   b. Listen for clues about community trends--be alert as to how the library can respond to expressed needs.

4. Develop a personal relationship with the C.E. director. Compare goals and objectives over coffee or lunch. Brainstorm together.

5. Continue to consult with professional peers in librarianship who are involved in cooperative projects with Community Education. Keep no trade secrets.

6. Assess library resources, personnel, hard and software, book collection, bibliographic information, Information and Referral as to how they can support Community Education. Make this information available to the C.E. director.

7. Establish goals and objectives regarding your cooperation with community Education including:

   a. Timelines.
   b. Task-force orientation.
   c. Evaluation and updating of goals and objectives.

8. Assess your own role as change agent. Improve your communication, managerial, professional skills where necessary. The Rogers and Shoemaker, as well as the Brown titles will be excellent resource guides.

Sharing in the above activities will be time consuming. They will not bring immediate results, which is a factor of which you must be acutely aware. You will experience disagreements, personality and agency conflicts. You will also be serving the community and be presented opportunities for library exposure that would not be possible otherwise.

B. Community Education is Being Considered for your Area--You are Unfamiliar with the Concept.

Community Education is an expanding concept. In the state of Texas alone, nearly eighty communities are in some stage of involvement. Your community may be considering C. E. for the public schools, what can you do to better prepare your self?

1. Attend the next public meeting called by the school district in regards to Community Education.

a. Establish an acquaintance with the consultant involved.
b. Become familiar with participants involved. You may have already established a relationship with some, if not, this could provide you with an opportunity for inter-agency communication and cooperation.
c. Collect literature distributed concerning the program--evaluate it. How does it relate to your philosophy of community service?

2. Communicate with professional peers who might have established cooperative programs with C.E. If possible, visit with them, discussing pros and cons of the concept.

3. If possible, visit a successful Community Education project comparable to your community size. The Community Education consultant should be able to direct you to suitable locations. What merit do you find in such projects--how do you see your library participating in such a project in your community?

4. Search library and educational literature to see how other institutions are cooperating in C.E.

5. Contact with your library school alma mater may provide you with information about cooperative projects between libraries and C.E.

6. Assess library resources, what contribution can your library make to Community Education. How can you benefit? How will the community benefit?

If you are convinced of the merit of Community Education and would like to see it established in your school district as well as cooperate with Public Library resources in such a project, you may want to follow these procedures:

1. Inform your staff of the merits of the program, perhaps a staff representative would want to attend the next C.E. feasibility study. Make available literature and A/V materials (the consultant or C. S. Mott Foundation Center for Community Education Development may supply you with these).

2. Communicate merits of the program with your superiors. Supply them with literature, A/V presentations, invite them to C.E. feasibility studies.

3. Communicate the C.E. concept with Public Library activities.

   a. Sponsor lunch bunch programs, inviting consultants for C.E. and school administrators to discuss merits of the program.
   b. If Public Library cable television is available, include C.E. in the format.
   c. If a library advisory council exists, introduce members to C.E., some may be candidates for a C.E. advisory council.
   d. When canvassing the community, inform residents about possible benefits of C.E. as well as library services.

4. Establish communication with the C. S. Mott Foundation Center for Community Education Development in your state.

5. If an opportunity arises, visit the Regional Center for Community Education located on the campus of a university serving your region. Enroll in an introductory class in Community education if feasible.

6. When a C.E. director is appointed for your school district, make yourself and library resources available for his use. Develop principles of common strategy for cooperation.

7. Serve, if requested, on the C.E. steering committee when formed. You will have an opportunity to develop a working relationship with a wide variety of professional, agency, and community leaders who are interested in civic affairs.

8. Participate in community and agency needs assessment surveys when conducted by C.E. Make available information you have accumulated through your own surveys, canvassing reports, review of census tract data.

9. Become a member, or encourage an interested staff member to be part of the C.E. advisory council for your local community.

These brief suggestions by no means exhaust the steps you should take if you are to be involved in introducing Community Education to your community. By linking your library with C.E. in the initial stages, exposure of a public service image can be expanded to a wider segment

of the community. Lagging in initiative may confirm negative impressions some community leaders have about public libraries, and will make it more difficult to establish credibility when you determine to participate in C.E. Do not however, participate before understanding the philosophy and goals and objectives of Community Education. If after you have made an assessment of those goals but are unwilling to risk involvement for fear of failure, conflict, self doubts about your own ability to function in an innovative venture, you are depriving yourself of an opportunity for self development. More important, you may miss a chance to increase service to the public and ensuing support.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Jack D. Minzey and Clyde LeTarte, Community Education: from program to process (Midland, Michigan, 1972), pp. 24-28.

[2]Ibid., p. 19.

[3]Texas A&M University Community Education Center, Initiating the Community Education Process (College Station, Texas, undated handout).

Eleanor Frances Brown, Library Service to the Disadvantaged, (Metuchen, N.J., 1971), pp. 7-8.

[4]Ibid., p. 28

[5]Minzey and LeTarte, Community Education: from program to to Process, p. 169.

[6]Ibid., p. 169.

[7]Everett M. Rogers an F. Floyd Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations (New York, 1971), pp. 226-48.

[8]Ibid., pp. 228-29.

[9]Community Education Journal, published by the Pendell Company, Midland, Michigan, 6 times a year.

[10]C. S. MOTT FOUNDATION Centers for Community Education Development, Community Education Journal, V(Nov.-Dec. 1975), pp. 52-55.